DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 173 HE 015 694

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TITLE Service Experience and the Moral Development of College Students.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 21p.; Not available in paper copy due to marginal legibility of original document.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Church Related Colleges; *College Students; Comparative Analysis; *Developmental Stages; Disadvantaged; *Experiential Learning; Females; Higher Education; Institutional Research; Males; *Moral Development; Moral Issues; Nontraditional Education; School Community Relationship; *Student Experience; Values
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ABSTRACT

The development of moral judgment of students was studied in two types of college courses requiring readings, lectures, and discussions. In one of the courses, students gained exposure to or served disadvantaged people; they combined reflection on this experience in the light of readings and lectures. The other course was a more traditional college course. Seventy undergraduates at Boston College, a medium-sized, church-related institution, were studied. Forty-one of the students were enrolled in the service course and 29 were in the nonservice course. The majority of the students were freshmen and sophomores. Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) was used to assess the development of moral judgment in a pretest/posttest design. The DIT's moral issues represent one of Kohlberg's stages; the respondent is asked to choose the most important items for a particular dilemma. Students who engaged in community service work showed a significant increase in moral reasoning on the DIT, while the comparison group did not. It was hypothesized that scores on principled morality would increase significantly more for the group involved in service than for the comparison group. It was also projected that principled thinking would increase significantly more for women in both groups than for the men. In the nonservice course, a shift to higher stages was found: while only 8 percent were on the principled level on the pretest, 28 percent were on that level on the posttest. For the service course, the percentage of students on the principled level rose from 26 to 54 percent. On the posttest, the mean scores of women in both groups were higher than those of men in both groups. (SW)

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Service Experience and the Moral Development of College Students

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A considerable body of literature on deliberate moral education is now accumulating. Blatt[1] was the first to explore the effect of classroom discussion on the level of moral judgment. Others have continued to report on moral education in both the secondary and college levels.[2,3,4,5,6,7]

The purpose of this pilot study is to examine the development of the level of moral judgment of students in two types of college courses both requiring readings, lectures, discussions. One, however, includes direct experience of and service to marginalized people together with reflection on this experience in the light of the readings and lectures. We are reporting on two issues: 1) curriculum innovation for college undergraduates and 2) the results of research on the development of moral judgment in students in the innovative course compared with the moral development of students in a more traditional college course.

Exum[8] had reported that experience without a seminar for reflection had no noticeable effect. We now were holding constant the reflective discussion which both groups had. We wanted to see if the student with practical experience-the only different variable-might achieve greater moral maturity/

Hypotheses

1. The group with practical experience would score higher on the pre-test of the Rest Defining Issues test than the comparison student group.

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2. The increase in the percentage of principled thinking between the pre-test and the post-test on the Rest DTT would be significantly greater for the group involved in service than for the group not so involved.
3. The increase in the percentage of principled thinking would be significantly greater for the women in both groups than for the men in both groups.

Underlying the first hypothesis is the assumption that students, choosing a course which is time-consuming and involves perseverance in working with disadvantaged persons who may not show their gratitude, might be on a higher, more other-oriented level of moral judgment than those choosing an alternate required course. We were more interested in the number of students who advanced and in the difference in the amount of growth than we were in the absolute moral scores of both groups.

The thinking underlying the second hypotheses is that of cognitive dissonance. It is thought that students can study the principles of social justice in the abstract and remain unmoved. When they are confronted with the actual evidence of persons who may be victims of society, evidence perhaps not consonant with their own existing moral structures and world view, the dissonance will facilitate or precipitate movement toward more principled thinking

With regard to the third hypothesis, following Gilligan's[9] clarification of the thinking of women on moral issues, we felt that women, exposed to such dissonant experiences which called forth care and responsibility would respond more thoroughly and grow more in principled thinking.

The Subjects

The subjects for this study were 70 undergraduate students in a medium size demoninational university. Forty-one of the students were in three sections of the service on Pulse course entitled Person and Social Responsibility and twenty-nine students were in two sections of the non-service course entitled Perspectives. The mean age of the Pulse group was 18.4 and the mean age of the Perspectives group was 18.0. The majority of the students were freshmen and sophomores.

Instrument

Rest's Defining Issues Test was used to asses moral judgment development.[10] It is an objective test whih presents the subject with six stories about controversial social issues.[11] The subject is then asked to rate a set of twelve issues according to the degree of importance in deciding what to do in the particular situation. After this the subject ranks in order the four most important issues. Each issue represents a moral judgment stage, according to Kohlberg's stages, and an overall score is determined.

The test includes a consistency check. There are nonsense items ("M" items) throughout the test which the test taker should mark as having "no importance" if the response is to be considered reliable. Consistency is also measured by checking if a student's rating of an item as of importance is consistent with his ranking of the items in order of importance. In addition, a subject should discriminate between answers and not rate all items as having equal importance.

One caution must be added at this point. While Rest's DIT builds upon Kohlberg's theories, it can not be considered simply a different format for measuring the same construct.[12] Rest's test uses a recognition task while Kohlberg's interview is a production task. In Kohlberg's interview the subject discusses moral issues and scores reflect the state spontaneously

produced by the subject. Rest's test gives the subject moral issues that have already been chosen to represent one of Kohlberg's stages and the subject is asked to choose the most important items for a particular dilemma.

In order to achieve the most accurate results possible, three different measures will be used in scoring the Rest test in this study. We will be using the "Principled" morality score or "P". This measures the "relative importance attributed to principled moral considerations" and is the sum of the scores obtained from the preference for stages 5a, 5b, and 6. Thus, "P%" is a percentage of principled thinking for each student.

In addition we will be employing the "D" score or empirically weighted sum. In the course of his studies, Davidson found that the D score is more sensitive to changes in lower stage scores than is P. When compared with a theoretically weighted sum, the D score displayed significantly higher correlation with Kohlberg's measure and displayed stronger longitudinal trends. On the D score, a student receiving below 21 is said to employ predominantly pre-conventional or conventional thinking. Those scoring over 21 use more post conventional thinking. Therefore, a significant increase in a D score reveals growth in conventional thinking whereas a significant increase in percent score is evidence of an increase in principled or post conventional thinking.

The Curriculum

Boston College is a medium sized Roman Catholic university in metropolitan Boston. All students are required to complete six course credits in both Philosophy and Theology. Among the several options given to students to complete these requirements are the Pulse and Perspectives programs. Both are twelve credit, two semester courses which are selected by students in the summer before their freshman year or by other students during the registration period of the previous semester. The classes are small, usually under thirty students, and the teacher and student interest is high.

The Perspectives program uses the writings of the major philosophical and religious thinkers to teach students about their heritage and cultural traditions. It encourages students to examine the values that have formed their lives as well as to develop a new perspective towards themselves and their future. There are lectures and small discussion groups reflecting on the lectures and the assigned readings.

The Pulse program was started in 1969 at the request of the undergraduate student government for greater relevance in the schools's curriculum. The program is unique in that it provides students with the opportunity to combine academic courses with field work experience. Each student participating in the program is required to spend ten to twelve hours each week in one of thirty field placements in the Boston community. A student might be working with homeless men and women at a soup kitchen, tutoring emotionally disturbed children, providing companionship and assistence to the elderly, or participating in one of many other projects.

Most of the over two hundred Pulse students receive academic credit for this work by taking one of the Pulse courses. The works of both contemporary and traditional thinkers are discussed so that the studnet can explore basic moral questions and their relation to the student, to society, and in particular to the student's own project. There are several courses in the Pulse Program.

Students in most sections of this course entitled Person and Social Responsibility are also required to keep weekly journals and to participate in small weekly discussion groups. The journals and discussion groups concentrate on the student's own experiences in their field placement. Thus the field projects put the students into direct contact with examples of social injustice, while the classes provide an opportunity to reflect upon these experiences in

the light of theological and philosophical theories.

Research Design

A total of 59 students in three sections of Pulse's Person and Social Responsiblity course and 62 students in three sections of the Perspectives on Western Culture course took the test. All of the Pulse students completed the test in class while two sections of the Perspectives students completed the test in class and one section completed the test at home and returned in the next class.

The post-test DIT was administered at the end of the spring semester in April 1979. Because this coincided with the undergraduate registration period, several students were missing from class and thus the number of students taking the posttest decreased. Forty-one Pulse students in three courses sections and twenty-nine Perspectives students in three course sections took the posttest. Two out of three Pulse course sections and two out of three Perspectives sections completed the test in class while the remainder took the questionnaire home for completion. The mean age of the Pulse group was 18.4 and the mean age of the Perspectives group was 18.0. Students who did not pass the consistency check devised by Rest in both the pretest and the posttest were eliminated from the study. Thus the final results consisted of the scores of only those students in both groups who had taken the pre-test and the post-test.

Results

Pretest results seen clearly on Figure 1 show that there was already a significant difference between the scores of the students in the Pulse Program and the scores of those in the Perspectives Program. When the data is broken down further, this difference can be accounted for largely by the higher scores of the female students in the Pulse Program. There is no significant

difference between the men and women within either group, nor is there any significant difference between the scores of the Pulse men and those of Perspectives men, but a significant difference is noted between the women in Pulse and the women in Perspectives.

Insert Figure 1 and Table 1

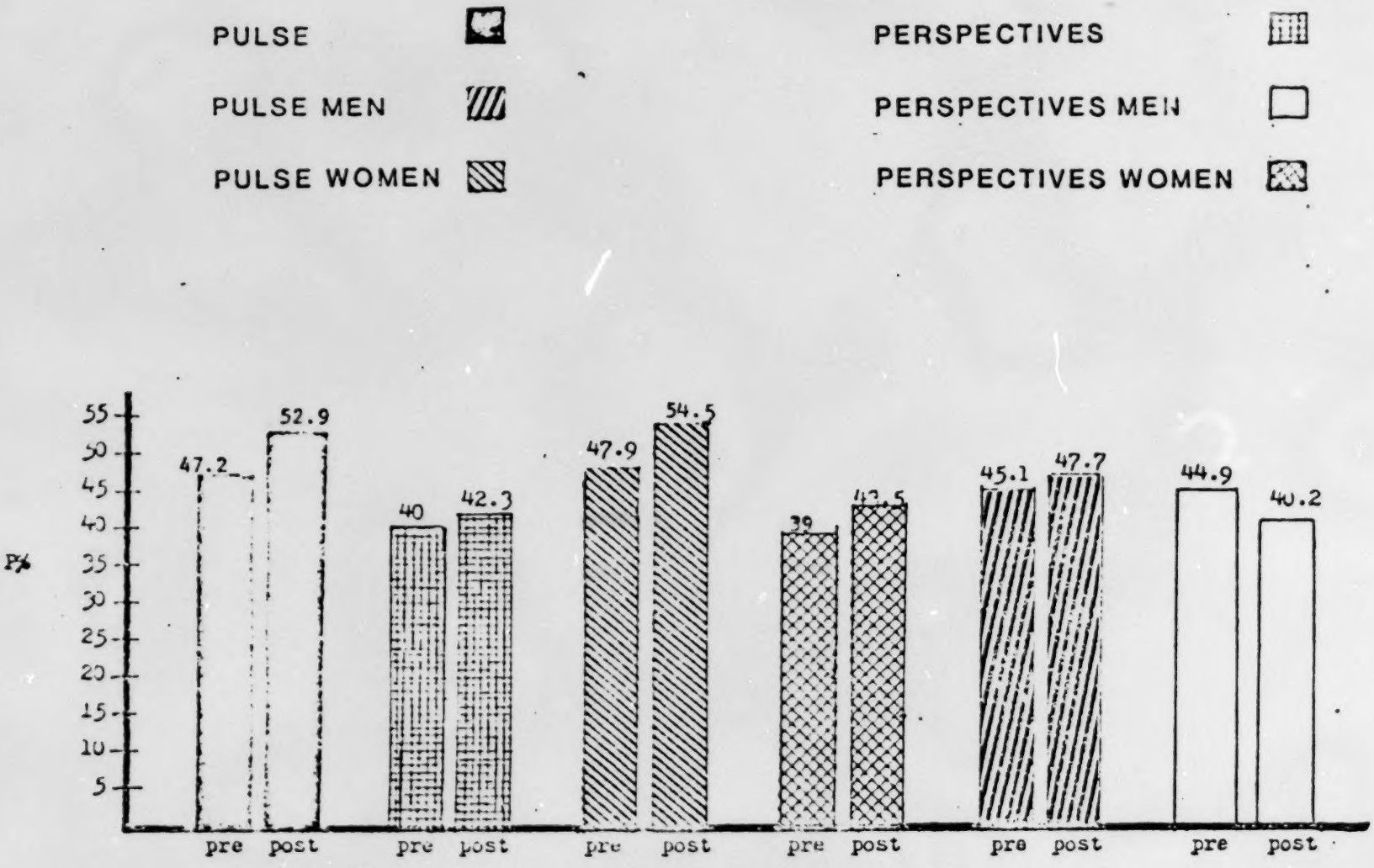
The posttest scores for the Pulse students are significantly higher than posttest scores for the Perspectives students as shown in P % and D score (Figure 1 and Table 1). Recent research has shown the D score to be the most accurate of the three measures and this shows the results as highly significant (t=2.796,p .001). When posttest scores are compared, there is no significant difference between the men and women within the Pulse Program or between men and women within the Perspectives Program, although in both cases the women do score higher than the respective men. But, the breakdown of the data shows the same trends in the pretest. Pulse men do not score significantly higher than the Perspectives men, but Pulse women's scores are significantly higher than those scores obtained by the Perspectives women. For P%, t-2.7743 and p .01; and for D, t-2.8477 and p .001.

Comparisons between pretest and posttest scores yield further results. There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of Perspectives as a whole on any of the measures. There is also no significant difference between the Perspectives women's pretest and posttest scores or between the Perspectives women's pretest and posttest scores.

But there is a highly significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the Pulse students as a whole.

Insert Table 2

For variable; for P%, t-3.671 and p .001; and for D, t-1.838 and p .07. Here again, it is the women's score which is creating all the significant



COMPARISON OF MEAN PERCENTAGES
OF
PRINCIPLED THINKING FOR VARIOUS GROUPS

FIGURE 1

TABLE 1

T-Tests with PZ
(Pretest vs Posttest)

GROUP	PZ		DF	t	p
	PRETEST	POSTTEST			
PULSE (ALL)	47.26	52.98	38	3.671	0.001
PULSE (MEN)	45.14	47.74	8	1.117	0.296
PULSE (WOMEN)	47.90	54.55	29	3.529	0.0017
PERSPECTIVES (ALL)	41.39	42.30	24	0.340	0.7357
PERSPECTIVES (MEN)	44.21	40.16	8	0.851	0.5763
PERSPECTIVES (WMN)	39.81	43.50	15	1.193	0.2503

Other Significant T-Tests for PZ

GROUP	t	p	DF
Pulse vs Perspectives (Posttest, all) 52.98 vs 42.30	3.081	NS	62
Pulse Men vs Perspectives Men (Posttest) 47.74 vs. 40.16	1.060	NS	16
Pulse Women vs Perspectives Women (Posttest) 54.44 vs. 43.50	2.774	.005	44
Perspectives Wmn vs Perspectives Men (Posttest) 43.50 vs. 40.16	0.524	NS	23
Pulse Women vs Pulse Men (Posttest) 54.44 vs. 47.74	1.459	NS	37

results. While the there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores for the Pulse men, there is a significant difference for the women on all three variables. For the variable for PZ, t=3.529 and p .001; and for D. t=2.719 and p .01.

Insert Figure 2

A bar graph of the stage types of the students reveals some of the trends in the scores (4). Although there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the Perspectives group, a shift to the higher stages is evident. While only 8% of the students are on the principled level in the pretest, 28% are on that level after the posttest. But unlike the Pulse group, most of the students scores still cluster around stage 4 or the authoritarian and social order orientation. The Pulse stage type scores do not cluster as significantly in any one area. The percentage of Pulse students on the principled level rises from 26% to 54%.

Insert Figure 3 and Table 2

Both groups also show fewer non-types in the posttest. The Pulse group has 43% students scoring as non-types on the pretest and only 23% on the posttest. The percentage of Perspectives students scoring as non-types falls from 44% to 11% after the posttest. Non-types are students who do not score consistently at any one level. Rest [illegible] tells the researcher to expect about 10% to 20% to be non-types. While the pretest non-type category for both groups was unusually high, the posttest scores fell into a more acceptable range. Since eighteen, the mean age, is an age of great change and growth, it is evident that both courses stablized and influenced the students' reasoning so that fewer students fall into the non-type category after the coursework. The growth of principled thinking of the women clearly supported our third hypotheses. In fact, the Pulse women's scores are consistently higher in every single category (Figure 3) and are the largest factor in the difference between the two groups.

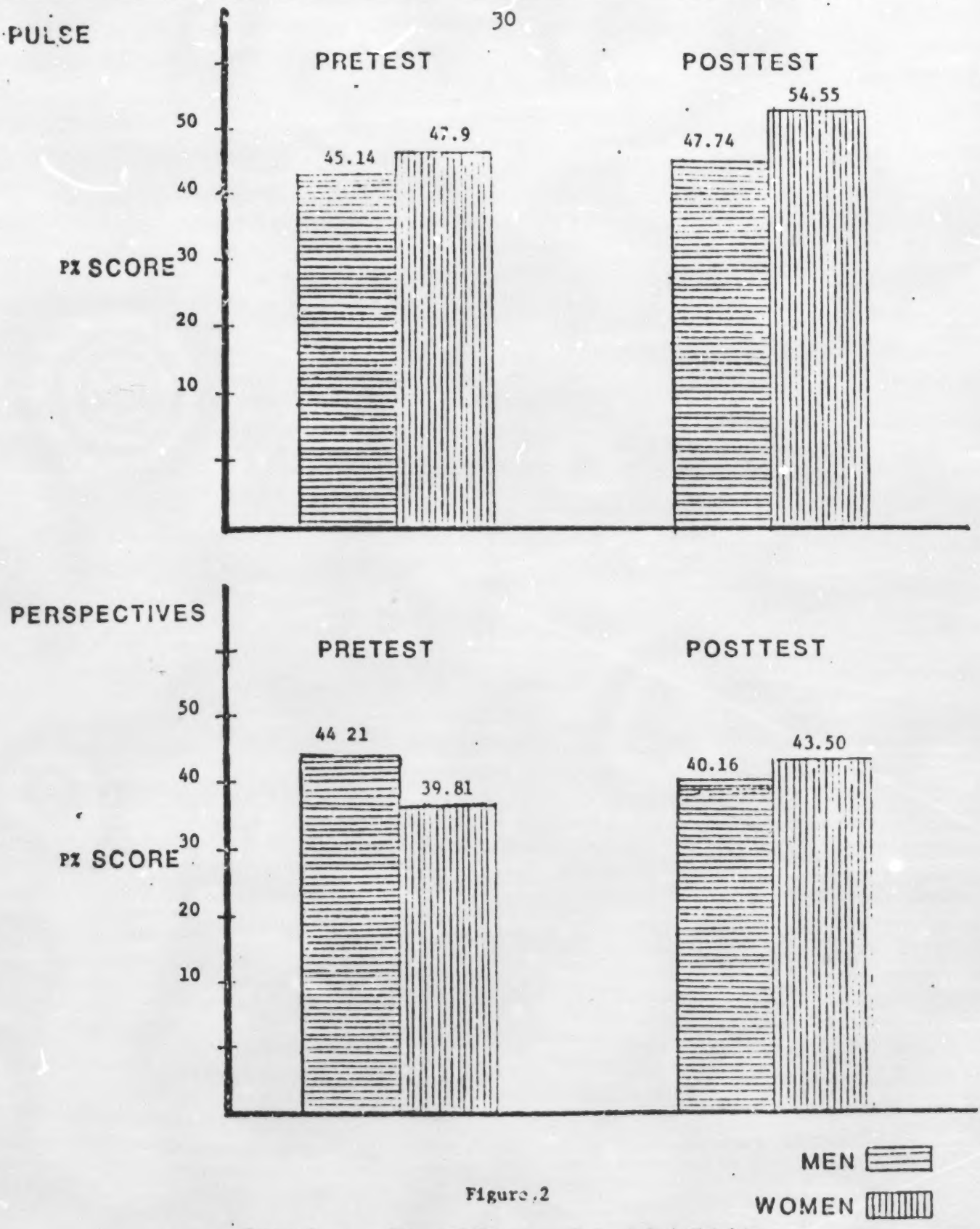


Figure 2

Comparison on Men and Women on Principled Thinking

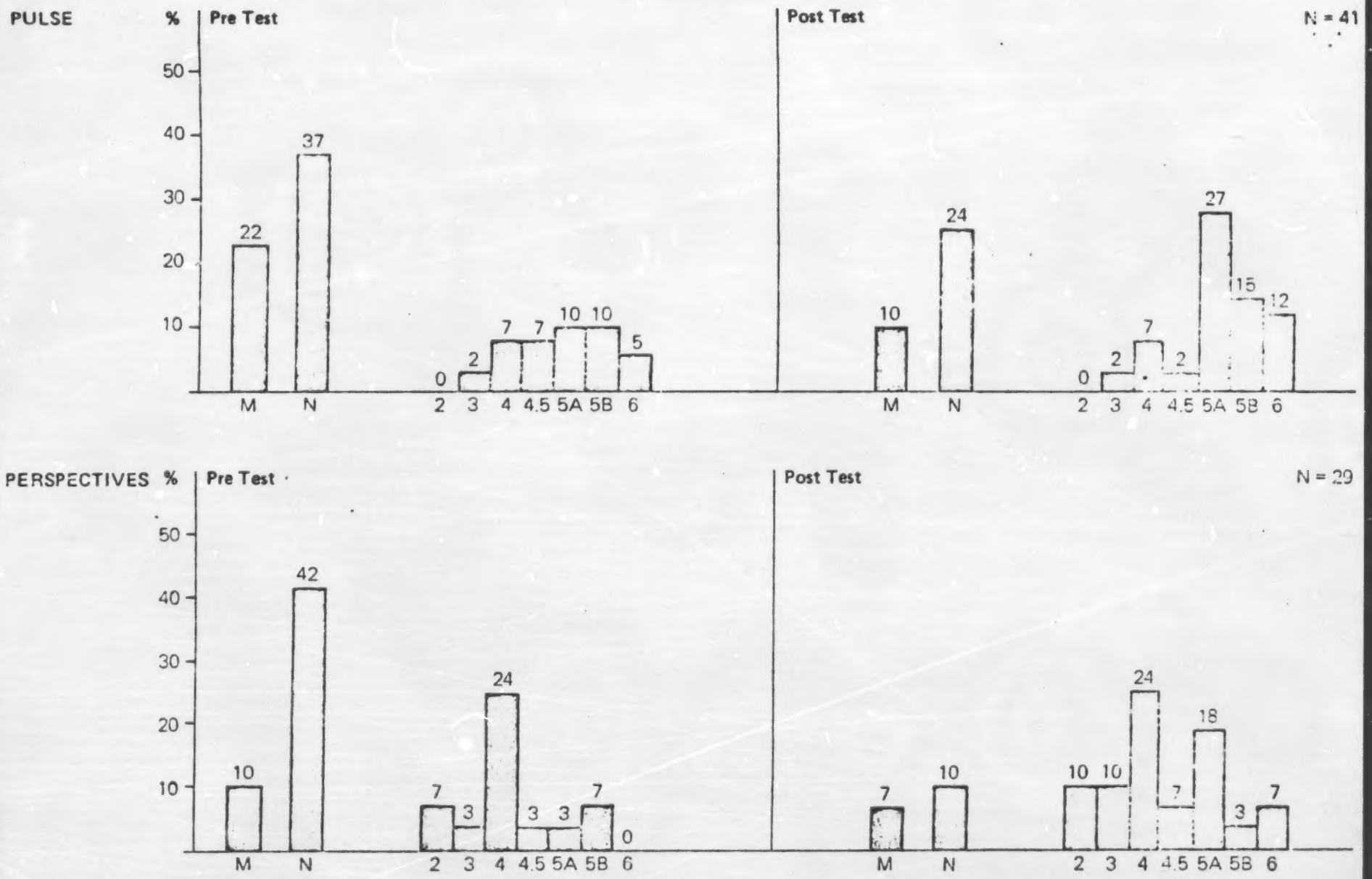


FIGURE 3, PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ON DIFFERENT STAGES

Table 2 Percentages on Different Stages

Stage Typing

STAGE	PRETEST				POSTTEST			
	PULSE N=41		PERSPECTIVES N=29		PULSE N=41		PERSPECTIVES N=29	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2	0	0	2	7	0	0	3	10
3	1	2	1	3	1	2	3	10
4	3	7	7	24	3	7	8	24
4.5(A)	3	7	1	3	1	2	2	7
5A	4	10	1	3	11	27	5	18
5B	4	10	2	7	6	15	1	3
6	2	5	0	0	5	12	2	7
NON-TYPE	15	37	12	42	10	24	3	10
MUDDLED	9	22	3	10	4	10	2	7
TOTAL PRINCIPLED	10	24	3	10	22	54	9	28

Discussion

Although this is only a pilot study, certain trends can be noted in the data. The Pulse students, those with service experience and reflection, showed a significantly higher rate of growth than the Perspectives students, those with reflection only on ethical issues. While both groups of students are involved in valuable coursework, the Pulse student is also involved in fieldwork within the community. Therefore the equality of experience differs for the two groups. The Pulse students extend their lives beyond the campus and are actively engaged in work that creates dissonance. By taking the Person and Social Responsibility course of the Pulse Program, the students also engage in reflection upon that experience through journals and discussion groups. The discussion group focuses upon issues that occur within the course of a student's own field work so that the moral dilemmas that are discussed are part of a student's own life. Input is received from both teacher and peers. Although the low number of men tested in this study prevent any generalizations between men's and women's scores, certain questions and ideas can be raised. According to this research, women are capable of scoring at the same moral development level, if not a higher level of moral development, as men. As far as the difference between the men and women in Pulse is concerned, we can only speculate. It seems apparent that the women in Pulse enter the program for different reasons, but it is impossible to identify these factors at this time. The decline of P% and D scores of the men in the Perspectives, although not significant, also raises questions.

Thus, certain trends clearly emerged in this study. Students who engaged in community service work showed a significant increase in moral reasoning on the Rest Defining Issues Test while the comparison group did not. Breakdown of the

data by sex showed that the scores of the female subjects were not lower than those of the men in any one group. In fact, on the posttest mean scores of the women in both groups were higher than the mean scores of the men in both groups.

Several improvements can be made in future studies. Instead of administering the pretest at mid-semester, it should be given close to the start of the school year to see if the differences between the two groups on the pretest were die to the the self selection of students into the two groups or if the Pulse students had already started to grow morally. More students, especially men, should be included in the research so that better results can be obtained.

It would be beneficial if follow up studies were made to see if the greater increase in the Pulse students' scores were maintained over time. Additional studies, could be made between students with course discussion groups and fieldwork, students with just fieldwork, and students in a course that included no experience but did include discussion to see the relative impact of filed-work as compared to reflection. The difference between the men's and women's scores might be better understood if correlations were made between each sex and the motive for entering the Pulse Program. Stage typing could also be done according to sex to see if it uncovers any new trends.

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